To Sikh Friends

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TATYASAHEB KELKAR

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

Friends have more than once asked me why I have not noticed the death of so great a patriot as Tatyasaheb Kelkar, especially because he was a political opponent and more so because I am much misunderstood among a school of Maharashtrians. These reasons made no appeal to me: the very reasons which according to my critics should have prompted my notice.

I conceive it to be very unseemly to notice *pro forma* such a serious event as death. But I must do so now, though it is late, because of the importunity of one of my oldest friends Haribhau Phatak.

I would at once admit that if it was usual for the *Harijan* to notice important deaths and births then Tatyasaheb's death should be among the first to merit notice. But industrious readers will have noticed that the *Harijan* has not followed any such practice. Notice has depended upon my whim of the moment and leisure. For some time past I have been unable to read newspapers regularly.

Whatever may be said to the contrary, Tatyasaheb, though a political opponent, I had always counted as a friend whose criticism was profitable. I knew and honoured him as the late Lokamanya's valued follower. It was, I fancy, in 1919 that I pleaded at an A. I. C. C. meeting for a constitution for the Congress and said that if the Lokamanya gave me Tatyasaheb and the Deshbandhu, Shri Nishith Sen, I would undertake to draw up one for submission to the Congress. Be it said to the credit of both the collaborators that though I submitted my draft to them in time, they never interfered with it. At the Committee that sat to consider the draft Tatyasaheb always offered helpful criticism. It was again at my suggestion that he was invariably appointed a member of the Working Committee. I do not remember an occasion when his criticism though sometimes bitter was not constructive. He was fearless but polite and friendly.

I had early learnt that he was a scholarly writer of Marathi. It has been my regret that I never got the time to learn Marathi sufficiently to drink deep of the wisdom of the modern Marathi writers like Tatyasaheb and the late Hari Narayan Apte. It would be churlish on my part to ignore the death of so great a star like Shri Narsopant Chintaman Kelkar in the Indian firmament.

New Delhi, 31-12-'47

THE PILGRIMAGE OF PENANCE

I

Sacred Gaya was the next item in my tour programme. The shooting flames of mass madness in the last Bihar carnage did not spare even this land where non-violence had its mighty birth in the heart of Lord Buddha.

GAYA

I visited Gaya towards the end of July. Up to Bakhtiarpur the bus travelled along the Ganga which runs through the Province like the chief artery with its network of tributaries. The river was almost always in view with its varying breadths carrying on its muddy and restless waters small sail-boats with their snow-white, swanlike bosoms. The heavy inky clouds no longer dripped, but nature, lusciously green, was dumb with expectancy. Except a few dirty, straggling children who looked idly on as we fleeted past, and a pair of lambs drenched and, perhaps, too frightened to run or too absorbed in each other, the roads were deserted.

Abandoning the Ganga at Bakhtiarpur, we travelled south up to Nawada, where I was to get hold of the jeep, that doughty invention of science which simply ignored all irregularities of the Terra Firma. It was to serve me in my tour of the villages: across the country, on *kachcha* roads and through mud and water.

The town of Gaya with the Rajgir hills to the North-East, the hills of Chota Nagpur to the South and hills and hillocks everywhere seems like a vale resting in the midst of surrounding hills. The town kept its sanity in the last riots. Was it due to the sacred influence lingering through the ages, rising embodied in that mighty and austere structure, the temple of Buddha Gaya by the side of the sacred and mysterious Phalgu, which is reputed to retain its undercurrent even when it seems to dry up, only seven miles from the present site of the town?

II

THE REFUGEE CAMPS

As the enveloping fire advanced from the original infernoes of Patna and Monghyr, hunted people sought refuge here. My first duty was to visit them. Later I visited the refugee camps of Amthua and Jehanabad. Here the refugees were distributed amongst the local population instead of being concentrated at one place as in Gaya. Despite some differences, the lesson of all was practically the same.

Idleness

The Gaya camp had the usual dirt of places where we congregate in large numbers. This inherent national defect was heightened by the laziness engendered by a life of practically complete idleness for the last few months. Even a cat sweeps with its tail the place it sits on. Yet hundreds of these able-bodied men would wait piteously for the sweeper rather than sweep a few hundred yards of ground. It is impossible to keep such a place clean when nobody seems to know how to use it cleanly and nobody wants to lend a hand in cleaning it.

In fact, the greatest tragedy that I noticed there was that their native resourcefulness, industry and courage, which enabled the toiling masses to bear through all trials cheerfully, was adversely affected. With hardly any education and lacking even the healthy urge to work for bread, the refugees had been completely demoralized. The roof of the shed they lived in badly needed repair. The contractor pleaded his inability to repair it quickly for dearth of labour. And yet there were so many able-bodied men who could have put their shoulders to it, and earned some money in the bargain! The hitch was that they demanded full payment while they were unwilling to put in the required amount of labour. This was the experience at other places too.

Beggarly Attitude

Closely allied to this was the beggarly attitude which long feeding on free rations had engendered in the refugees. This is the greatest loss of the Bihar Muslims due to the last carnage. Gandhiji had been warning against this catastrophe right from Noakhali. Rations against work only should be given to the refugees. If it seemed cruel, it was being cruel to be kind.

Ration at Controlled Rates

The difficulty to procure rations at controlled rates outside has also made the refugees stick on piteously to the refugee camps. And they stay on on all sorts of pretexts. In Amthua, a strong centre of Muslims, lived many Muslims belonging to adjoining villages within a radius of a mile from Amthua. Some members of their families had even gone to live there for looking after their lands. Amthua's is by no means an isolated instance. Singly the refugees go to their villages, sleep there, dine with their Hindu fellow villagers, yet they are afraid to go there *en masse* !

Corrupt Practices

Where the refugees are distributed amongst the inhabitants of the locality, it is almost impossible to check their number. The-family draws rations in the father's name, in the mother's and also in the name of the individual members. So even though the individual quota is not much, the refugees are by no means ill-fed. The system of *purdah* for women makes checking still more difficult. Till lately nobody seemed to have any idea as to the exact number of the refugees that were being fed. Refugee figures for which rations were drawn were highly inflated.

In fact, the ration business does not reflect credit on most of the parties that have handled it. Till lately ration and cloth distribution, in practically all the refugee camps, was in the hands of the Muslim League. The Ministry completely unnerved by the colossal unexpected massacre entrusted the entire care of the refugees to the Muslim League. Everything it asked for was immediately supplied. Nobody seemed to dare ask for accounts. Thousands of maunds of ration came and disappeared into the black market. Cloth sent for distribution met the same fate. In the Gaya Camp itself more than a thousand blankets and a large number of *sarees* had been given for distribution. Today the refugees do not possess a single one of those. Either they found their way to the League volunteers or they were sold away by the refugees themselves.

Injustice and Hostility

All this has created in the minds of the Hindus a sense of injustice and turned them against the refugees and the whole scheme of relief — a thing that is suicidal for successful rehabilitation, which must be based at least on the active friendship of the Hindus. The political opponents of the Government play upon this feeling, which is very strong amongst the hungry and the naked millions in this period of great scarcity.

Lost them Best Friends

The League did it and did it with a vengeance. After it had got control over the refugees, it created an iron-ring round them. Even those Congress workers who had risked their lives to save them were not allowed near them. Some of them were even implicated in cases at the instance of the League. Even some of the top-ranking Congress leaders who dared to enter the refugee camps were roughly handled. The reaction was bound to be bad. It lost to the refugees even their best friends. Only after Gandhiji's arrival did the indifference, if not in some instances positive hostility, of Congressmen slowly begin to melt away.

Reserved Ammunition

Sheltered from all healthy influences, the League kept them as reserve ammunition for their scheme of creating Muslim "pockets" in the Province, probably with a more sinister ultimate purpose. It would have at least permanently cut off the Muslims from the Hindu population. By playing on their hatred, distrust and fear they kept them in the camps, which were sources of huge profit in the bargain, while they fought on for "pockets".

Worse Evils

The result of this long "detention" has not only been the idleness and the beggarly attitude mentioned above. It has led to worse evils which promiscuous living of idle men and women inevitably leads to. A number of these refugees do manage to find an occupation in the town. But the money so gained is very often ill-spent. The vested interest that thus develops also makes them unwilling to go to the 'Thana Camps', which would have facilitated their final rehabilitation in their own villages.

III

GLIMPSES OF THE FIERY PAST

The affected villages were visited next. The stories of their inaccessibility rather egged me on. My Sevagram training was on trial, I felt. The roads were *katcha* and broken and covered over with water more than knee-deep at places and the *kiwal* soil was terribly sticky. Or there were no roads at all and we had to tread the narrow dividing lines between various fields requiring all our skill and attention to maintain our precarious balance, especially when it rained. We went by jeep, we walked or passed through fields, streams and streamlets and knee-deep mud on elephant back.

SADAR SUB-DIVISION

In the Sadar Sub-Division were visited Siswar, Makhdumpur, Hathiawan and Khizer Serai. Sapaneri, the worst affected village in the Sub-Division, escaped by mistake. The huge Khizer Serai Camp, where people even from a large number of unaffected villages had congregated out of fear, had been cleared by the time I reached there. People from unaffected villages had gone home. Others had been removed to other camps in the district.

JEHANABAD SUB-DIVISION

In the Jehanabad Sub-Division, the land of Mathurasingh and the Mahanth of Lohgarh, I visited Hati, Malathi, Daulatpur, Kako, Amathua, Bibipur and Khalishpur. At a number of these villages and a few others by the roadside the inhabitants were also addressed.

Amused at the way I was desperately clinging to the ropes to maintain my precarious balance on the back of the elephant, my companion, the young but austere and universally respected President of the Thana Congress Committee told me how he had even slept on the elephant whilst he moved day and night for full one week in the sub-division during the last riot.

The hymn of hate taught by the Muslim League for years, the direct action day and the subsequent Calcutta massacres and the mysterious bloody happenings of Noakhali, the elation of the League leaders and the League inspired masses on hearing them and the seeming impotence of the Interim Government, had created an explosive mentality, which was fully exploited by misguided or interested people. The bubble burst in Patna and Monghyr. Jehanabad which was so near the bloody scenes of Massaurhi and Hilsa could not remain untouched. The rioters were joined on the way by a section of the local population. Many kept on joining and abandoning when they felt that they had looted as much as they could carry. The horrible scenes of Noakhali were repeated. There were more murders, but unlike Noakhali hardly any rape or conversion.

DID NOT GO MAD

One misunderstanding, however, needs to be cleared. There are so many instances where the Hindus saved the Muslims and made a large scale evacuation of Muslims possible that one cannot resist the conclusion that the masses did not go mad. There were two gangs, one in Ghosi P. S. and the other in Makhdumpur P. S., who wrought most of the havoc. The other conclusion is, however, equally obvious that due to some silent sympathy with the rioters and lack of organization, the saner section of the population did not offer any resistance worth the name in most places.

A BEACON LIGHT

Though there was no organized mass resistance to the riotous mobs, the Congress on the whole rose to the occasion. Apart from the Ministers and Government servants, the Congress big guns toured the affected districts. Many small unknown workers saved the lives of Muslims at the risk of their own.

One such was Sakalbabu, a simple saint-like, but tough Headmaster of the Hati English High School. With his students and some other workers he personally patrolled day and night the villages of Daulatpur, Nagama and Rasalpur until the entire Muslim population had been evacuated to Jehanabad. Inspired by his example the Hindus of Daulatpur were, up to the day of my visit, guarding the Muslim houses. One of the Muslims who met me, very touchingly said that even the radish that he had left behind had dried up undisturbed in its own place. And yet many Muslims were not returning to the place because it was unsafe!

A TRIUMPH OF NON-VIOLENCE

Another glorious chapter was written in Kako. In the morning a small mob advanced on Kako. The Muslims fired killing two Hindus. They also set fire to a Hindu house. The Hindus also killed one Muslim. The Hindus were maddened. They spread like wild fire through the surrounding villages and brought back a mob with them ten thousand strong. But the Congress workers persuaded them to go back. Force at the disposal of the officers would have been entirely insufficient for the purpose. A part of the returning mob attacked Belai. But it is believed that they were the stragglers, who came a little too late to listen to and understand the persuasions of Congressmen. It is believed that if the mob of ten thousand had been allowed to go out of control at Kako, the loss to life and property would have been incalculable. Apart from Congress workers, the S. D. O. Jehanabad also came out well through the test.

Patna, 4-11-'47 DEV PRAKASH NAYYAR

(To be continued)

GANDHI'S CHALLENGE
TO
CHRISTIANITY
By
S. K. George
With Forewords
By
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and
Mr. Horace Alexander
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TO SIKH FRIENDS

Seven centuries had elapsed since the advent of Islam in this country. The first phase of its propagation had finished. It had lost much of its original purity and simplicity. As has happened with all other religions of the world, fanaticism, bigotry and superstitions had gathered round it. So too, in Hinduism true religion had become covered up with senseless caste distinctions, untouchability and a myriad superstitious beliefs and wrong practices. The Hindus and the Muslims mainly debated with each other over their respective forms and dogmas, ignoring the true spirit of their own faiths. Kabir has tersely described the religious condition of the times in the following lines:

> The Hindus say they love Rama,
> The Musalmans say they worship Rahman;
> Both fight with each other over words,
> None sees the common spirit.

A number of great souls were born in this country to remove the crusts of useless forms and superstitions from both the great faiths, to exhibit their fundamental unity and to bring them nearer to each other. Among those great souls Guru Nanak's name is one of the most honoured. Guru Nanak is rightly regarded as one of the greatest exponents of the Religion of Humanity which is also the Religion of Love.

Guru Nanak went on pilgrimage, both to Mecca and Rameshwar. His entire way of life could be styled neither Hindu nor Muslim, or rather was a mixture of both. The *Granth Sahib*, the sacred book of the Sikhs, gives a true picture of the religion preached and practised by Guru Nanak. His religion was the religion of unity, the religion of love, a complete synthesis of both Hinduism and Islam. For centuries after him the saying was common among the Musalmans of the Frontier and even beyond — "Nanak was a *Paighambar*, i. e. a Messenger of God." If Hinduism of that day could be compared to the Ganga and Islam to the Jamna, then the religion of Guru Nanak could be likened to the confluence of the two at Prayag. Talking of the equality of man and man he says:

> At first God created Light,
> Then from God's prowess proceeded all creatures,
> The whole world is born of His effulgence,
> How can you call one good and another bad?

In pathetic words he has described the dissensions of the Hindus and Muslims of his day, and, on account of those very dissensions, he bluntly refused to call himself a Hindu or a Musalman. He says:

> The Hindu has not found the way,
> Nor has the Muslim found the way;
> Devoid of true faith
> They both fight over the names Rama and Rahim.
> We are neither Hindu nor Musalman,
> Both are possessed by the spirit of Satan.

The language of the *Granth Sahib* is from beginning to end a mixed language. In the very name of the book, *Granth* is a Sanskrit word and *Sahib* an Arabic word. Looked at in this light the language of the *Granth Sahib* is true Hindustani. Among the names of God mentioned in the *Granth Sahib* the name *Allah* occures over and over again. The book is full of various other Persian and Arabic names of the Almighty. Besides compositions by the Sikh *Gurus*, the *Granth Sahib* also includes those by a number of other saints and devotees, at least four of whom were Musalmans. When Guru Arjundeva needed somebody to lay the foundation stone of the Golden Temple at Amritsar, he selected for the task a Musalman *fakir* named Sain Mian Mir who performed the sacred function. Sikhism fully maintained this noble and beautiful character up to the end. A study of the *Dasham Granth*, which contains the compositions of th[e] tenth *Guru*, Guru Govindsingh, reveals that in this matter there was no difference between the views of Guru Govindsingh and those of the previous nine *gurus*. At one place the tenth *Guru* says:

> One styles himself a *mundia*, the other a *sannyasi* and the third a *yogi*;
> One calls himself a *brahmachari*, and the other calls himself a *yati*;
> One says he is a Hindu, the other says he is a Musalman;
> One declares he is a member of the *Rafzi* sect and the other professes to be a follower of Imam Shafi;
> But if you look carefully, they all belong to the same Man race.
> People call the same God by various names;
> Some call Him *Karta*, others *Karim*, some *Razik* and others *Rahim*;
> Yet He is all one; let none be deceived by the multiplicity of names.
> All are servants of the same God: He is the guide of all.
> All are created in His image; His light shines through all eyes.
>
> The temple and the mosque are one, the Hindu *puja* and the Muslim *namaz* mean the same thing.
> Mankind is one; differences are but a delusion.
> Gods, demigods, demons, *gandharvas*, Hindus, Muslims are but differences due to different countries and climates.
> All have the same eyes, the same ears, the same bodies and the same organs of speech.
> All are created out of the same elements — earth air, fire and water.
> *Allah* and *Abheda* are both names of the same God.
> The *Puran* and the *Quran* teach the same truths.
> All are created in the same way and all serve the same purpose.

Yet today some of the followers of the same *Granth Sahib* and of the same Sikh *Gurus* raise objections to the taking of the name *Allah* or to the recitations from the *Quran*.

The Sikh *Gurus* did not alter this all embracing character of their faith on account of any wrong act committed by any one else. They could not possibly do so. If they had done so, Sikhism would not have been what it is today. The *Granth Sahib* could not be altered. The *Granth*, which occupies a place of honour among the sacred books of the world, and which is a true and immortal guide for all time, could not be altered.

Almost all the Sikh *Gurus* were scholars of Persian and have left excellent poetical compositions of their own in that language. The *Granth Sahib* itself is a treasure house of compositions in various languages then spoken in this land. Steady and unmoved, it is an ocean of love, unity and harmony. Even so, many Sikh friends today try to shun the Urdu language and the Persian script.

At the gate of a Sikh *gurudwara* called *Bangla Sahib* in Delhi I was painfully astonished to find the Urdu words *qayam kiya* translated as *pravesh kiya* in Hindi. Any visitor who reads only the Hindi rendering and not the Urdu or English may easily misunderstand the real significance. *qayam kiya* or *aram kiya* or *thahre* are universally intelligible, while *pravesh kiya* is obviously misleading. The boycott of the Urdu language, the Urdu script or words of common use pertaining to any language and all such prejudice in the matter of language is contrary to the spirit of the *Granth Sahib*, of the Sikh tradition and of the noble Sikh *Panth*.

The Sikh religion lays far greater emphasis on justice, goodness, forgiveness, generosity and other moral qualities than on mere form of worship. But today we have to confess with shame and sorrow that the followers of Sikhism have in no way lagged behind the Hindus or Muslims in committing the darkest crimes which have disgraced and humiliated us in the eyes of the whole world. Throwing out helpless victims from running trains has been a frequent occurrence up to the beginning of the current month. Sikhs have been no less guilty in this ignoble traffic, nor have they been free from the vices of drink and its attendants. We are writing all this with great reluctance and pain. We appeal to the leaders of the Sikh community, in all humility, to raise their voice against the evils. It is altogether a different matter to use arms against an armed opponent. There is bravery even in deeds of violence. But it is cowardice to butcher women, children, old and helpless people or minority groups who are not in a position to offer any resistance. Sin and crime cannot raise a nation.

"Have the critic and the fault-finder as your next door neighbour, have his hut in your own yard," is a well-known Sikh adage. But today some of the over enthusiastic followers of that noble cult send threatening messages even to those who as friends try to point out to them their error.

There is no room for doubt that even now, if the Sikh community makes up its mind, it can become the medium of establishing real and abiding unity between the Hindus and the Muslims. It can irrigate with pure and flowing currents of love, brotherliness and harmony the whole field of our mutual relationships. We have repeatedly said that if people in general and especially those of the Punjab, would really follow the teachings of Guru Nanak, they would need no other guide, bacause there could be none higher or nobler. In the present crisis the Sikh community, if it so chooses, can act as an Army of Peace. But it can only be possible if the leaders lead truly.

New Delhi, 22-12-'47 SUNDARLAL

INERT THAKUR BECAME A LIVING PRESENCE

We started spinning just in fun as a recreation and a sport in which I and my chums could join. There were about fifty boys and girls and women with a sprinkling of men from three villages of Bhatialpur, Karatkhil, and Mogarpara to begin with. They were all more or less destitutes and constantly living under a pall of fear which threatened to shatter their nerves. The charm which saved them was provided by collective *Ramanama kirtan* and spinning.

The story of the former I must reserve for some future occasion. Suffice it to say that it sprang from an experience of intense inner anguish and suffering which is of too personal and sacred a nature to be set down here. The effect was nothing short of miraculous.

Spinning used to be done in front of a riot-ruined *Thakurghar* on bamboo *taklis*, which the spinners had made with their own hands. Carding was done by *tunai*, i. e. with the fingers without a carding bow. When seed cotton was used, ginning too was done by hand without any appliance. Nobody had an idea at that time as to how the yarn would be utilized. It was just a labour of love and, therefore, its own reward — a joy for ever.

An opportunity, however, soon presented itself when the people of Mogarpara decided to install the *Thakur* in their *Thakurghar*. They wanted a note from me to enable them to obtain a piece of cloth from the Government Relief Officer for an *asana* (altar cloth). Their request made me feel very sad. "Have we come to this," I said to myself, "that even our *Thakur* has to live on the sufferance of the ration office ? " "No, we shall do better. I shall show you the way," I told them. I asked them to collect all the *takli* yarn that we had spun. It was turned into a piece of cloth — 4 cubits long by 26" wide overnight by a *nath* (scheduled caste) weaver of Karatkhil who is a devotee himself. Weaving at such short notice was made possible by doubling the yarn and turning it into *dosuti*. Not a thread was wasted of the very first yarn spun by these novices.

In the same way, not a pie was spent on *prasad*. *Thakur's* favour cannot be purchased for money, I

told them. It is not a thing to be bought and sold, it is obtained by our "sweat, blood and tears". For some time past we had started cocoa-nut oil production as a supplementary home craft. Necessity was the mother of invention. With rice selling at Rs. 28 per maund, the little boys and girls, who used to go to school with me and play with me and sleep with me, began to complain of empty stomachs. Their cry of distress in spite of their willingness to work wrung one's heart. Cocoa-nut oil provided the answer. It put into the pockets of every man, woman and child, who worked, from Re. 1 to Rs. 2/10/- per day. I suggested it to them that while daily they expressed oil for themselves, for one day they should do it for their *Thakur*. They agreed. Two hundred and fifty cocoa-nuts were accordingly purchased and distributed among various homes that evening and men and women and children set to work with a joy and an enthusiasm which had only to be seen to be believed. Kitchen fires kept burning in most homes till 11 and 12 o'clock that night. The net income from the operation came to Rs. 16 and odd, out of which Rs. 4 went to the purchase of jaggery.

The by-products of oil — *machka* and *chhoba* (butter and oil cake) were converted into delicious *sandesh* by the addition of *gur* and provided *prasad* at the evening ceremony in such abundance as hardly to leave room, in the case of many, for the evening meal. That left a net saving of Rs. 12 and odd — *Daridranarayan's* gift to be enjoyed by his devotees · *Tena tyaktena bhunjitha* तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः (Enjoy by abandoning it).

The *Thakurghar* itself was erected mostly by voluntary labour. The earth for the plinth was dug out of the adjoining tank, thus deepening and improving it; the mats on which the congregation sat were woven by a widowed refugee sister from the village out of cane grown in her *badi*. As an offering and mark of homage to the deity, the people of the village cleared their tank of water hyacinth and repaired its dilapidated embankment by working till late in the night although several of them were suffering from malarial fever.

In the place of the image of the Thakur was installed the *Gita*. After the *harikirtana*, I explained to the gathering how through their labour of love they had converted the intert *Thakur* into a living presence which would keep them, if they kept their covenant with Him. Their *Thakur* had not deserted them as some of them had complained. It was they who had betrayed their *Thakur* by bartering Him for their miserable belongings and existence. They had lost Him, but He would come back to them and protect them if they pledged themselves never to let that happen again even if it cost them their life. They had weathered out the dark days of lawlessness and terror by enveloping themselves in the protecting mantle of *Ramanama* which they recited daily. By what they had done then, they had given body to their prayer. They were faced by a precarious future. When East Bengal was constituted into a separate sovereign State they would have to live there as a permanent minority, entirely dependent for its safety and integrity on its inner resources. But a minority of one can convert itself into a majority by alliance with God. What they had done that evening indicated the way how to do it. "Your *Thakur* will not only fill you with faith which dispels all fear, but also provide you with food and clothing so that you will never go naked or hungry if you continue to serve Him as you have done on this occasion."

The pledge was accordingly taken by all by observing two minutes' absolute silence. Cocoa-nut oil production during that season brought them nearly Rs. 1600 net income in addition to the share capital deposit of Rs. 905 and odd, kept on their behalf with their centre.

In front of their *Thakurghar*, according to the latest report received by air mail today, 11 *charkhas* and 22 *taklis* are now plying daily. The total quantity of yarn spun so far by our spinners in five villages is over one maund and in a month or so, every one of them will have at least one piece of cloth prepared out of self-spun yarn.

New Delhi, 22-12-'47 PYARELAL

Matter well Placed

Compost is matter well placed, whereas rubbish and excreta, solid and liquid, are matter misplaced when they are allowed to lie anyhow to the discomfort of the public and detriment to their health. It is a criminal waste depriving mother earth of her precious food. Thus says Shrimati Mirabehn in her leaflet reproduced in full in the *Harijan* of 23-11-'47, pp. 428-429:

> "We do not treat our Mother Earth properly. She does her best to feed us all, but we do not feed her in return. How can she sustain us, her children, if we do not serve her as dutiful children should serve a revered Mother? Year after year we plough, sow and reap harvests from the fields, but very rarely do we give any manure to the soil, and even what we give is usually half *kachcha* rubbish. Just as we need well-cooked food, so does the soil need well-prepared manure."

The curious may get a copy of the leaflet from her at the Kisan Ashram, Rishikesh, near Haradwar.

New Delhi, 29-12-'47 M. K. G.

NOTICE

Files of Volume X of the three Harijan weeklies — the *Harijan* (English), the *Harijanbandhu* (Gujarati) and the *Harijansevak* (Hindustani) of the year beginning with 10-2-'46, and ending with 26-1-'47, bound in cardboard cover and *khadi* back are available at this office.

Price *Rs. 8-0-0*: Postage & packing *Re. 1-0-0*

MANAGER

GANDHIJI'S ADDRESS TO DELHI BUSINESSMEN

FORCE OF PUBLIC OPINION

Addressing a meeting of businessmen at Hardinge Library this afternoon Gandhiji said that he agreed that control of prices was unsuitable for India, whatever might be the case elsewhere, least on food or cloth. The Ministers were their servants. They could do nothing against the express wishes of the people. They would not stay in office a day longer than the people wished. In the course of their struggle against the British for the last thirty-two years they had shown what public opinion could achieve. The British had the force of arms to back them up. The present Government had no such thing to back them. But now they had much more if they had the force of enlightened public opinion.

REASON FOR CONTROL

The reason for control was the fear of dishonesty and profiteering. Why should a businessman get more for his labours than a labourer for his? In Gandhiji's opinion the truest control came from the honesty of growers, manufacturers and middlemen. It was up to the trading class and mill-owners to dispel suspicion. The businessmen wanted removal of control for the sake of the people and not for the sake of profiteering. Therefore, they were bound to be cent per cent honest. The various associations of businessmen and mill-owners and the general public could strengthen each other's hands for the removal of control. They would then be the more real arm of the Government than the Civil Service. The *Gita* said, 'please the gods and they would please you.' The *devas* there did not live up in the sky. They were the *devas* as women were and were called *devis*. Only men's modesty prevented them from addressing themselves as *devas*. The men whom the *Gita* described as the *devas* were honest and pure of heart. Then would disappear all shortages.

SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN CLOTH

As for cloth particularly, Gandhiji was convinced that the people could and should prepare their own cloth in their villages. Then and only then, crores spent on cloth would go in the pockets of the millions of villagers. That was real business. It did not consist in merely making money anyhow. He saw in the hall a placard saying that the prosperity of India lay in decontrol. He agreed heartily because of his belief in the fundamental honesty of businessmen. Let them not belie his faith.

Gandhiji said that he had heard that foreign cloth was on the increase and also that our cloth was being exported from India. In his opinion both things were wrong. India needed no cloth from outside and so long as there was cloth shortage in India, there should be no export of mill cloth. He would welcome the export of all Indian mill cloth if the masses would be good and wise enough to spin and weave in their villages.

Another placard said, "Beware of mill-owners' tricks." Gandhiji said that he went further and said, "Beware of all strictly." The caution applied to himself, the other public men and to the business-men before him.

New Delhi, 28-12-'47

GANDHIJI'S POST-PRAYER SPEECHES

Birla House, New Delhi, 22-12-'47

NO DESECRATION

Not perhaps eight miles from here is the mausoleum of Kutubuddin Bakhtiyarkaki Chishtisaheb which is reputed to be second in sanctity to the one in Ajmer. Both are visited not only by Muslims but by thousands of Hindus and other non-Muslims in equal veneration. Hindu wrath visited the sacred place in early September last. The Muslims in the surroundings felt compelled to vacate their favourite home which had been such for close on four centuries. It would be unnecessary to mention this tragic occurrence but for the fact that the place is still deserted by the Muslims, however much they may be devoted to the mausoleum. It behoves the Hindus, the Sikhs, the officials immediately in charge and the Ministers to wipe out the disgrace and reinstate the place in all its original glory. What I have said here is equally applicable to all the Muslim places of worship in and around Delhi and elsewhere in the Union. It is high time that both the Governments by their firm action made it clear to their respective majorities that they could no longer tolerate desecration of the places of worship, big or insignificant. All damage done to them should be repaired without delay.

DUTY OF THE UNION MUSLIMS

In view of the decision recently arrived at by the Muslim League meeting held in Karachi and in view of the meeting to be held in Lucknow at the instance of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Muslim friends have been asking me whether if they were members of the Muslim League, they should attend the Lucknow meeting, whether they should also attend the meeting of the League members to be held in Madras and in any event what the attitude of the members of the Muslim League in the Union should be. I have no doubt that if they are invited specially or publicly, they should attend the Lucknow meeting as also the later meeting at Madras. At each meeting they should express their views fearlessly and frankly. That the Muslims in India find themselves in a minority without protection from the majority in Pakistan is no disadvantage if they at all followed the technique of non-violence during the past thirty years. It was not necessary for them to have faith in non-violence to be able to appreciate the fact that a minority, however small it might be, never has any cause for fear as to the preservation of their honour and all that must be near and dear to man. He is so made that if he understood his Maker and himself as made in His image, no power on earth could rob him of self-respect except he himself. A dear English friend in Johannesburg, while I was fighting the mighty government of the Transvaal, told me that he always made common cause with minorities. For, he said, they were hardly ever in the wrong and if they were, they could be weaned from it without difficulty, whereas majorities could not be, owing to the intoxication that power gave them. The friend had uttered a great truth, if by majority we would also understand the power that exclusive possession of weapons of destruction gave an aggregate of men. We know to our cost that a handful

of Englishmen were able to be the majority, keeping under their heels millions of Indians by possession of arms which India did not have and could not know how to wield them even if she had. It is a thousand pities that neither the Hindus nor the Muslims learnt the lesson whilst the English power was in operation in our country. The Union Muslims are now free from the oppressiveness they were under, whilst they were falsely proud of the Muslim majority in the West and the East. If they would realize the virtue of being in a minority, they would know that they could now express in their own lives the best that is in Islam. Will they remember that Islam gave its best during the Prophet's ministry in Mecca ? Christianity waned when Constantine came to it. But I must not here carry this argument further. My advice is based upon implicit belief in it. Therefore, if my Muslim friends do not share the belief, they will perhaps do well to reject the advice.

Be of the Congress

In my opinion, while they should hold themselves in readiness to join the Congress, they should refrain from applying for admission until they are welcomed with open arms and on terms of absolute equality. In theory at least the Congress has no major and minor communities. It has no religion but the religion of humanity. For the Congress every man or woman is equal to any other. It is a purely secular, political, national organization in which Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis, Jews are equal. Because the Congress has not always been able to live up to its professions, it has appeared to many Muslims as a predominantly caste Hindu organization. Any way, Muslims should have dignified aloofness so long as the tension lasts. They would be in the Congress when their services are wanted by it. In the meantime they should be of the Congress even as I am. That I have an influence without being a four anna member is because I have served it faithfully ever since my return from South Africa in 1915. Every Muslim can do so from now and he will find that his services are as much valued as mine. Today, every Muslim is assumed to be a Leaguer and, therefore, to be an enemy of the Congress. Such unfortunately has been the teaching of the League. There is now not the slightest cause for enmity. Four months are too short a period to be free from the communal poison. Unfortunately for this unhappy land, the Hindus and the Sikhs mistook the poison for nectar and have, therefore, become enemies of the Muslims of India and have to their disgrace retaliated and become so even with the Muslims of Pakistan. I would, therefore, urge the Muslim minority to rise superior to the poisonous atmosphere and live down the thoughtless prejudice by proving by their exemplary conduct that the only honourable way of living in the Union is that they should be full citizens without any mental reservations. It follows then that the League cannot remain a political organization, even as the Hindu Mahasabha or the Sikh Sabha or the Parsi Sabha cannot. They may function as religious organizations for internal religious reform for the purpose of exploring the best and living the best that is in their religions. Then they will purify the atmosphere of all poison and vie with one another in well-doing. They will be friendly to one another and thus help the State. Their political ambition can only be satisfied through the Congress, whether they are in it or not. The Congress will be a caucus when it thinks of those only who are in it. It has very few such even now. It has as yet an unrivalled position because it strives to represent the whole of India without exception. It aims to serve "even unto this last."

Birla House, New Delhi, 23-12-'47

Prayer Time

A friend had given a note to Gandhiji suggesting that in view of the increasing cold, prayers might be held at 5 p. m. instead of 5-30 p. m. Gandhiji said that from the 21st December the day would be gradually lengthened, but he would respect their wishes all the same. He asked those who wanted the prayers to be held earlier to raise their hands. A large number wanted the prayers earlier, there was no dissentient and it was, therefore, decided to put back the prayer time by half an hour.

Non-Muslims in Bahawalpur

Some people from Bahawalpur had brought placards to the prayer ground the day before on which was written: "Save the 70,000 Hindus and Sikhs of Bahawalpur." Gandhiji was silent, so he referred to the subject today. Two friends saw him during the day in the same connection. They said that they were contemplating fasting before the Governor-General's house till arrangements were made for the evacuation of the Hindus and Sikhs from Bahawalpur. Gandhiji said that such a step would help none. The Governor-General had no power today except such as he derived from his Cabinet. He had no longer the might of the British Empire at his back. Nor could he utilize his power as a fine warrior that he was. For the time being he had put it in cold storage. He nevertheless agreed that arrangements should be made to bring the Hindus and Sikhs from Bahawalpur. It was the duty of the Nawabsaheb to make arrangements to send them wherever they wanted to go outside Pakistan. Bahawalpur was, he understood, made principally by the Sikhs. Yet they and the Hindus had to suffer terribly. The Nawabsaheb could not disown responsibility in the matter. But let bygones be bygones. He appealed to the Nawabsaheb to make a declaration that not a hair of the head of any Hindu and Sikh would be touched in the State till arrangements were made for their evacuation. During the interval they should be well looked after.

Refugees in Pakistan

The day's Statesman says :

> "After being in the grip of a cold wave for three days, when the minimum temperature fluctuated between 34° and 36°, Lahore had its first shower on Saturday morning. Rain fell on Sunday and again today, much to the misery and harassment of thousands of undernourished and scantly clothed refugees who have no bed and no roof except the overcast sky above them. Taking a walk on the Mall yesterday, I could hear in the stillness of the night the moans and groans of these unfortunate people.

* * *

"Until a few days ago cholera was prevalent and from September 6 to date nearly 2,500 cases have occurred in the city, about a quarter proving fatal. Now smallpox of a virulent type has broken out and on an average is causing 20 deaths every day. In the last three days 125 cases have been reported to the Health Department.

* * *

"Outbreaks of epidemics are perhaps not surprising, especially when it is borne in mind that the most insanitary conditions still prevail here.

"Sweepers have been brought from Murree and other places but, as the Health Officer ruefully admitted to me today, his staff has not yet succeeded in getting the maximum work out of them. The unsightly heaps of garbage all over the city and the stench which greets visitors to streets and lanes in thickly populated parts of the city are sufficient to convince one that if sanitation does not improve soon disease is likely to take a heavy toll."

Gandhiji was of the opinion that it was wrong for the refugees to have servants rendering the necessary service. The refugees should themselves attend to them and try to do some other work on behalf of the whole camp. They must turn their misfortune to the best account. It was the duty of both the Governments to see to their food, shelter and clothing, but never to produce an army of servants for them. Whether they were Hindus or Muslims or Sikhs, they should not shirk what was miscalled menial work including latrine cleaning, nor must they become lazy. People must shed the evil habit of thinking that sanitary work was to be confined to a special class of people. The audience must excuse him for showing so much care about the Muslim refugees in Pakistan. He could not make any such unmanly distinction.

News from Noakhali

Gandhiji then told the audience that his secretary Pyarelalji had come to see him from Noakhali. Pyarelalji and his colleagues had, in his opinion, done very good work there. They had stayed there at Gandhiji's instance even at the risk of their lives, if necessary. It had given great comfort and courage to the Hindus and it had also enabled the Muslims to realize that these volunteers were the friends of all and wanted to restore peace and goodwill. Pyarelalji had told him of one incident which he wanted to share with them in his own words:

"What may be termed the first act in restitution in Shahpur, which was the starting point and storm centre during the riots and where I have been working for the last thirteen months in pursuance of Gandhiji's "Do or Die" mission in Noakhali, was performed the other day when the local Muslims with their own hands removed a mosque which they had erected on a site belonging to the Hindus out of dismantled material of the house of a local Hindu businessman. Both the dismantled material and the site have been restored to the rightful owners. In a signed declaration which the leading local Muslims have issued, they have described the act as "a gesture of goodwill towards our Hindu brethren and a step towards their rehabilitation." The step was not taken without some vigorous heart-searching and even at the eleventh hour there was some talk of having a joint meeting of the Hindus and the Muslims of the locality to "explore means" of "amicable" settlement by "compromise". But they at once saw the point when it was pointed out to them that compromise could have no place in a matter which called for restitution on the part of the majority community, specially, when it was the offender. Even if there were no demand on the part of the minority, still the majority community would be bound to do full redress. Before the dismantling commenced I told the leading Muslims that unless they did the restitution from their heart, I would far rather that they left it alone for the time being. Physical restoration was nothing unless it symbolized a heart change and carried with it the guarantee of the goodwill of the majority community. On my part I assured them that I would not let the authorities use coercion on them, so long as I was there. They however, assured me that they really meant to do the reparation from their heart and proceeded with the dismantling with *Bismillah* on their lips. The credit for the performance was due to the commendable good sense shown by the local Muslims and the exertions of the district officers, particularly the District Magistrate, who is untiring in his efforts to promote peace and goodwill between the two communities. This is not to say as yet that "God's in His heaven" and "all's right with the world" in Noakhali. The "petty done" only lends hope and encouragement in regard to the "undone vast", which has yet to be tackled."

If all in India and Pakistan followed this example, the shape of things would be changed in no time. The key to the solution of the tangle lay in everyone following the best in his own religion and entertaining equal regard for the other religions and their followers.

Birla House, New Delhi, 24-12-'47

Was It Non-violence?

In his post-prayer speech this evening Gandhiji said that some Sikh friends had been coming to see him. And he had seen some newspaper cuttings. There seemed to be a general impression that he had become an enemy of the Sikhs. They would not have worried much about that but for the fact that his word seemed to carry weight with the world outside India. The world thought that India had won her independence through non-violence and if it was so, it was a unique thing in history. How Gandhiji wished that it was so! But he had already said that it was not. The cowardly or the weak and the lame of heart could never practise non-violence. The physically disabled could always practise non-violence if they had the grace of God. He had blindly thought that the Indian fight was non-violent. But the events that had taken place lately had opened his eyes to the fact that theirs was passive resistance of the weak. If Indians had really been bravely non-violent, they could never have indulged in the acts of which they were guilty. They had before them the instance of Prahlad, the twelve year old boy, who had alone stood up against the might of the king, his father. He would rely on none but God.

MISPLACED ANGER

Gandhiji said that he could not but laugh at the anger of the Sikh friends. They attributed to him many things that he had not said. He made no distinction between the Hindus, the Sikhs and the Muslims. He had criticized the Sikhs for their drink habit and for the atrocities that they were reported to have committed. That did not mean that all the Sikhs had acted in the wrong manner. Nor did it mean that the Hindus could be absolved. As they were a virile race, he certainly expected more from them. He had freely acknowledged their many merits if he had pointed out their faults. Those who tried to minimize or overlook cruel deeds done were enemies of the Sikhs; not he, who owned no enemy. Whatever he had said, he had said as a staunch friend. He was not unaware of the lofty teachings of the *Granth Sahib*. The Sikh friends should never fear that they would be misjudged by the world because of what he had said.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Gandhiji next referred to the Christmas day of the morrow. It was a festival for the Christians as *Deepavali* was for the Hindus. He did not think that either festival was meant for indulgence in drinks, dances and merry-making. These were holy days making one examine oneself and do better next year. He offered greetings to all Christian friends in India and outside and hoped that they would enforce in their own lives the teaching of Jesus Christ. He warned the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs against entertaining any ill-will towards the Christians, who were a minority in India. Nor should they entertain any wish about converting them to Hinduism, Islam or Sikhism. He did not believe in such conversions. He wanted the Christians to be good Christians, the Muslims to be good Muslims, the Sikhs to be good Sikhs and the Hindus to be good Hindus under all circumstances. That to him was real conversion.

He had seen in the newspapers that in view of the fact that State patronage to Christianity or any other religion would not be given, 75% of the Churches in India would have to be closed down. Gandhiji said that religion could never be served through money. The Christians should rejoice that an artificial prop was being removed. God was omnipresent. Our bodies were the real temples rather than buildings of stone. The best place for congregational worship for any religion in his opinion was in the open with the sky above as the canopy and mother earth below for the floor. Every individual was the protector of his own religion against the whole world.

Birla House, New Delhi, 25-12-'47

THE QUESTION OF KASHMIR

In his post-prayer speech this evening Gandhiji talked of Kashmir. He said that he had seen in the newspapers some reference to an arbitration over the issue of Kashmir. Were the Union and Pakistan always to depend on a third party to settle their disputes? How long would they go on quarrelling?

There was some talk about the division of Kashmir. It was fantastic. It was more than enough that India had been divided into two. One would have thought it impossible for man to divide a country which God had made one. Yet it had happened and the Congress and the League had both decided upon it though for different reasons. But that did not mean that the process of dividing should be further extended. If Kashmir was to be divided, why not other States? Where would this process end?

It was said at first that Kashmir was attacked by raiders. But as time went on, it became clear that Pakistan was at the back of the attack. He had a passage of an Urdu daily, the *Zamindar*, read out to him that day. In that the Muslims were openly invited for recruitment and join the *jehad* (crusade). Abuses were showered all round. He knew Maulana Zafar Ali Khan during the Khilafat days. In those days too he could curb his tongue with difficulty. Now evidently he seemed to have no check on his tongue or pen. Did he mean that the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs were to be perpetual enemies? Whatever the provocation, Gandhiji advised the Hindus and the Sikhs not to retaliate.

The facts seemed to be that Pakistan was at the back of the attack on Kashmir. The Union troops had gone there at the call of the people of Kashmir as well as the Maharaja to help them in defending the beautiful valley. He considered Sheikh Abdulla to be the real head of Kasmir. Everyone who had been to Kashmir had told him what an unrivalled hold the Sheikhsaheb had on the Muslim masses and the few non-Muslims in Kashmir. In these days an Indian Prince could remain one only as the titular head even as the English king was.

THE JAMMU INCIDENT

He had heard of the murders of numberless Muslims and abduction of Muslim girls in Jammu. The Maharajasaheb must own the responsibility. The Dogra troops were under his direct control. He had not yet become the mere constitutional head and, therefore, he must be held responsible for all the acts, good or bad, of people under his rule. Sheikh Abdulla had been to Jammu and had tried to allay passions. He would advise the Maharaja to step aside along with his Minister in view of what had taken place in Jammu and give the fullest opportunity to Sheikh Abdulla and the people of Kashmir to deal with the situation. Such a graceful act would become him as the head of a very great and important State in India.

PRIDE OF PAKISTAN

Pakistan was proud of being the biggest Islamic power in the world. But they could not be proud of themselves unless they ensured justice to every single Hindu and Sikh in that State.

If Pakistan was to become a worthy State, let them and the Union representatives sit down and thrash out the Kashmir affair as they had already done in the case of many other things. If they could not do so, why could they not choose from among themselves good, true persons who would direct their steps? The first step was an open and sincere confession of past lapses. Hearty repentance broke the edge of a guilt and led the way to proper understanding. The Congress Government could never stand for the Princes against their people. It could only deal with the Princes as trustees of their people.

RECALLING GHAZNAVI

Gandhiji next referred to an Urdu magazine published in the Union wherein was a verse to the effect that

everyone was talking of the Somnath temple that day. But in order to avenge the happenings in Junagadh a new Ghaznavi would have to come from Ghazni. It had deeply hurt Gandhiji. How could any Muslim worth the name in the Union entertain such thoughts? Why should he not be proud to associate himself with the act of the renovation of Somnath? He hoped that no true Muslim would be proud of the acts which are imputed to Mahmood Ghaznavi. He had pledged his life to secure safety for the Muslims in the Union. He would not swerve from his pledge, because he believed in returning good for evil. He asked the Hindus and the Sikhs not to be carried away by passions. But he asked his Muslim friends not to make the task of reconciliation more difficult than it was. He would not have referred to the mischievous couplet but for the fact that it was to be found in an important publication.

Birla House, New Delhi, 26-12-'47

In his post-prayer speech this evening Gandhiji informed the audience that the prayer next day would be held at a village about eleven miles away from Delhi. There was a *Panchayat* established there and he was told that people from that part would gather there to take part in the prayer meeting.

Tibia College

Gandhiji then talked to them about the Tibia College at Delhi. It was an institution conceived and founded by the late Hakim Ajmal Khan. Hindu and Muslim princes as well as the people had subscribed to the funds. Unfortunately, the Hindus and the Sikhs had, after the 15th of August last, come to look upon the Muslims as enemies. But it was not so in the past. Muslim and non-Muslim students received training there. There were Muslims and non-Muslims among the trustees, the late Dr. Ansari being one of them. The college gave trained students in the *Ayurvedic*; the *Unani* and the Western systems. Today the college had no students. It was situated in Karol Bagh and the Muslims could not enter the locality except at the risk of their lives. It was a problem to find out which locality was safe for the Muslims today. Some Hindu friends had been to see him that day. They wanted to know what was to become of this college. Gandhiji considered it a matter of sorrow and shame that the college should be in that condition. He was trying to do what he could in the matter. He pleaded with the Hindus and the Sikhs not to work for their own destruction. He who worked for the ruin of another was bound to ruin himself. That was the law of life. He begged of them not to ruin themselves and their religion.

Abducted Women

Gandhiji next talked to them of another subject which could bear repetition. Several thousand Hindu and Sikh girls had been taken away by Muslims. The whereabouts of a few were known, but there were large numbers about whom he knew nothing. When contacted some were reported to have said that they did not wish to return. They were afraid that they would not be accepted back by their society. Their husbands, parents and friends would look down upon them. Gandhiji wanted to say, with all the emphasis at his command, that society should welcome those girls back. Some of them were pregnant. It was no fault of theirs. Their children, when born, should be treated with the same regard and respect as any other children. The religion of these children would be that of the mother. On growing up they were to change it if they wished. If any such girl came to him she would be treated by him as any other girl in his party. To castigate these girls, for having fallen a victim to the lust of some monster, was less than human. No shame attached to them.

Gandhiji had been told that many Muslim girls had been abducted in Patiala and Kashmir and other places by Hindus and Sikhs. Some of them were girls from well known families. If his voice could reach the places where these girls were, he would strongly advise the guilty parties to restore them without delay. There was no doubt that they would be accepted back by their families.

No Bargaining

He had heard that some Hindu and Sikh girls were with a Muslim Pir, who said that they would not be ill treated in any way, but that they would not be returned till the Muslim girls were returned. Could there be a bargain in such matters? Both sides should rescue and return the abducted girls at the earliest opportunity, irrespective of what the other side was doing. Then alone could they hope to live as respectable and respected citizens. Otherwise, they would become a nation of forty crores of *goondas*. A society that tolerated such crimes would be judged according to the pattern of its *goondas*.

Sammalka village (near New Delhi), 27-12-'47

Consistency in Thought, Word and Action

Saturday evening prayer meeting was held at village Sammalka where a *Panchayatghar* had been built. He was presented with garlands at the entrance. An address was also presented. Addressing the gathering after prayers, Gandhiji said that the meeting was held for prayers. At such a meeting garlands, addresses and shouts were out of place. He would have been pleased if they had omitted them. They had mentioned truth and non-violence in their address, but if they did not practise those virtues, there was no point in talking about them. On the contrary, mere mention of them was harmful. Ever since his return from South Africa he had visited thousands of villages. He knew how these addresses were prepared. Someone wrote it out and someone else read it parrotwise and that was the end of it. There must be consistency between one's thoughts, words and actions. Driving away the minority community or ill treating them did not fit in with the profession of *ahimsa*. Independence did not mean that people could act in any way they liked. Could anyone pray for and work for the freedom to commit murders and tell lies? That would be surrender to Satan instead of God.

Duty of the Panchayat

Gandhiji congratulated them on having built a *Panchayatghar*. Unless they did the work of the *Panchayat*, the effort would be a waste of time and labour. Distinguished travellers from the world came to India in the days of yore from China and other countries. They came in quest of knowledge and put up with great hardships in travelling. They had reported that in India there was no theft, people were honest and industrious. They needed no locks for their doors.

In those days there was no multiplicity of castes as at present. It was the function of the *Panchayats* to revive honesty and industry. If he asked them after one year, would they show a clean record and would they show that they had no court save their *Panchayat*? It was the function of the *Panchayats* to teach the villagers to avoid disputes, if they had to settle them. That would ensure speedy justice without any expenditure. They would need neither the police nor the military and they would not need to trouble Shri Randhavasaheb except as a friend.

CATTLE IMPROVEMENT

Then the *Panchayat* should see to cattle improvement. They should show steady increase in the milk yield. Our cattle had become a burden on the land for want of care. It was gross ignorance to blame the Muslims for cow slaughter. Gandhiji held that it was the Hindus who killed the cattle by inches through ill treatment. Slow death by torture was far worse than outright killing.

ENRICHING THE SOIL

The *Panchayat* should also see to an increase in the quantity of foodstuff grown in their village. That was to be accomplished by properly manuring the soil. The Compost Conference recently held in Delhi under the inspiration of Shrimati Mirabehn had told them how the excreta of animals and human beings mixed with rubbish could be turned into valuable manure. This manure increased the fertility of the soil. Then they must see to the cleanliness of their village and its inhabitants. They must be clean and healthy in body and mind.

BE AN IDEAL

Gandhiji hoped that they would have no cinema house. People said that the cinema could be a potent means of education. That might come true some day, but at the moment he saw how much harm the cinema was doing. They had their indigenous games. They should banish intoxicating drinks and drugs from their midst. He hoped that they would eradicate untouchability if there was any trace of it still left in their village. The Hindus, the Muslims, the Sikhs, the Parsees and the Christians should all live as brothers and sisters. If they achieved all he had mentioned, they would demonstrate real independence and people from all over India would come to see their model village and take inspiration from it. May God crown their endeavours with success.

Birla House, New Delhi, 28-12-'47

MEETINGS IN THE OPEN

In his after-prayer speech this evening Gandhiji told the audience that he had been to attend a meeting of businessmen in Delhi at the Hardinge Library. There was a very big crowd round the building. The hall was too small for the surging mass of people. When there was a noted man expected to address meetings, he would advise their being held under the canopy of the sky on a wide *maidan* so that all who cared could join. If they were noisy and would not allow the meeting to be held, the meeting would disperse without doing its business in the open. And if the people became used to outdoor life, they would be spared the headache of finding houses for thousands and thousands. They could stay outdoor for most of the time or else build thatched houses for themselves in the open.

REMOVAL OF CONTROLS

Gandhiji was daily receiving telegrams and letters congratulating him on the removal of controls. It had a miraculous effect all round and the prices had gone down. Although the control on cloth was still there, the prices of towels etc., he was told, had gone down. The businessmen knew that he (Gandhiji) was merely voicing the opinion of the millions when he said that the controls should go. The goods of black market were, therefore, coming into the open market and selling at reasonable prices. He was told, too, that there was plenty of sugar to be had. The price was Re. 1 per seer and it was lowered to As. 15 and even As. 14 very often. He was told that the removal of the control had brought much relief to the people. He could take no credit for what was happening in the matter of controls. The real credit went to the masses whose wish he was voicing. If his personal voice had any effect, the unseemly communal trouble would have ceased long ago. In this matter they dubbed him as a visionary and a madcap. He knew that they were wrong and he was right. If he had been right and practical on many occasions in the past, why was he unpractical in this matter of life and death? Tulsidas had said that the essence of religion was mercy and forgiveness. That was exactly what Gandhiji had been asking them to follow.

Returning to the matter of controls, Gandhiji said that the controls on cloth, fire-wood and petrol should also be removed forthwith. He had dealt with cloth control at the meeting of businessmen. As for firewood, people were not going to consume more firewood than necessary, if the control was removed. Removal of the control could not adversely affect the poor in the matter of firewood. It was the control on petrol that was hitting them hard on all sides because he understood that it hampered road transport. They did not have enough railway transport. To make new railways and wagons was a long time project. They did not need new railways. The removal of the control on petrol would make it wholly unnecessary. Swift road transport of foodgrains, cloth and salt would lower the prices of those articles. The salt tax had gone and yet salt had become more expensive than before. It was partly due to transport difficulty and partly due to some bungling about contracts. A few contractors were said to be fattening at the expense of the consumers. The evil must be rectified. The people should be taught to prepare salt wherever they could. He held that it was the easiest thing to do, now that salt was free.

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